

Journal of Air Law and Commerce

Volume 9 | Issue 1

Article 14

1938

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Recommended Citation

Blanche Noyes, *Airport Marking in the States*, 9 J. AIR L. & COM. 94 (1938)
<https://scholar.smu.edu/jalc/vol9/iss1/14>

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AIRPORT MARKING IN THE STATES*

BLANCHE NOYES†

The air marking program which is being carried on over the entire United States has many problems which discourage state aviation officials and WPA administrators. One of the first stumbling blocks which we usually run into is the fact that officials are always afraid of being criticized by the taxpayers for painting the name of a city on the top of a roof—something which only people who fly have the opportunity to use. I am afraid that they overlook one of the main factors in the advantage of having each city and town in the United States marked so that a pilot may at any time locate himself. While government ships are radio-equipped and have a full line of instruments, still the time might come, as it has already, when the pilots who have been flying on top of an overcast must come down through and find themselves unable to locate the nearest airport, run out of gasoline, and crash. As a result it costs the government more to pay for one ship than it would to airmark an entire state. Not only that, but there is the chance of the loss of life or the permanent injury to the pilot and crew.

It has been said that as soon as fear is taken out of flying every airline will be filled to capacity. Not only is that true of airlines, but when fear is taken out of flying, I believe that airports also will be self-supporting. It has not been so many years ago since the automobile was considered as hazardous as an airplane, but with the improved highways throughout the country the automobile industry grew by leaps and bounds; and the out-of-the-way places which were formerly known as "sticks" are at the present time show places, due to automobile travel.

Our sky-ways should be as completely marked as the highways. For, regardless of how splendidly equipped your automobile might be, you would never think of starting from New York to California without a route sign. I don't think it is necessary for me to stress the value of air-markers to anyone present. Each pilot, regardless of whether he flies a radio-equipped ship or an airplane with very few instruments, if the time should ever come (and I hope it never shall) when this country should get into war, would

* Address presented at the Seventh Annual Convention of the National Association of State Aviation Officials, December 1-3, 1937.

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be a potential army or navy pilot, saving the government thousands of dollars for his training. I think it is our duty to encourage youth to fly and it is also our duty to make flying as safe as possible.

A director of aeronautics from the east recently said to me, "We have an air-marker every four square miles and it isn't half enough. It's a shame that a law can't be passed in each state forcing every city to paint its name on the roof of its largest building."

The State of Ohio passed a law in 1930 making it compulsory for every town to paint its name on some roof. If the city failed to comply the name was painted on and the bill sent to the city; and it usually cost the city more than if it had taken care of the job itself. The result was that at one time Ohio had 1,330 air-markers.

Time is too short for me to give a detailed report on each state's activity. I would like to cite a few instances where air-marking was rather slow in getting started, for example the largest state in the Union—Texas. Due to the fact that they did not have an aeronautics commission or anyone else to push the air-marking project, it was necessary to convince the Governor of the value of air-marking. He in turn had the Adjutant General's office ask for an appropriation of \$6,000 for paint and the Highway Department for use of truck or trucks in each WPA district. These two bills were passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor, thus enabling Texas to complete its air-marking program. Missouri is air-marking through the WPA with assistance of the Adjutant General's office furnishing trucks to transport men to the various towns which are being air-marked. In the State of Oklahoma a private owner, Mr. James Braziel, who is a seventy-one year old flyer, is going to furnish the paint, the WPA the labor, to mark every town and city in Oklahoma. Nebraska's Aeronautics Commission secured an appropriation of \$6,000 through their Legislature and completed their air-marking. In the State of Colorado, the City of Denver furnished trucks, the Adjutant General's office (through the Governor) furnished the gas and oil, and the WPA the labor and paint.

Each state is an individual problem and if there is anything that I can do to be of assistance, please call on me; for your success means my success. I would like at this time to thank the many aviation commissions who have done, and are still doing, such a splendid job in air-marking, and while it would probably not be necessary to have an air-marking pilot, I would like to see each state have an aviation commission.

And, last but not least, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that one of the first air-marking ambassadors was a man to whom monuments are being erected all over the country, a man who gave you so much, not only as a writer and humorist but as a moving picture actor, and who gave his life in an airplane—Will Rogers. I believe he would appreciate seeing every town air-marked in some way and that it would be a more fitting tribute to him who offered to pay for the paint and labor to have the name painted on a roof in each town. Stone monuments are beautiful—but one air-marker might save many lives.